



ALL ABOUT

Hay & Your Pet's Health

Key Health Benefits of Hay:

DIGESTIVE HEALTH

- The fiber in hay facilitates the constant digestive movement that small herbivores need to maintain digestive health.
- Disrupting movement in the GI tract even for a short period of time can lead to a number of potentially life-threatening issues.
- Providing grass hay most closely mimics the foraging activity small herbivores would perform in nature, making hay the ideal material to support digestive health.

DENTAL HEALTH

- Small herbivores require constant chewing of fibrous foods to provide proper, necessary dental wear. Hay is the ideal material to serve this important function.
- The teeth of rabbits, guinea pigs, and chinchillas never stop growing, making it critical to provide a proper diet centered around hay.
- A diet with insufficient hay can lead to dental issues including disease, tooth elongation, and malocclusion.

MENTAL HEALTH

- Hay encourages the natural foraging behaviors of small pets, providing an essential opportunity for mental stimulation.
- Access to a variety of high-quality hays provides different tastes and textures for your pet, keeping him active, engaged, and healthy.
- Place hay in as many locations as possible throughout your pet's living space to maximize mental enrichment.



GASTROINTESTINAL STASIS is a serious condition that occurs when the digestive system slows down or stops completely. There are steps you can take to minimize the likelihood that your pet experiences this condition:

- Feed a high fiber diet of unlimited grass hay (at least 70% of the diet)
- Schedule regular vet visits (at least once a year for healthy pets)
- Keep an eye out for signs of underlying issues, such as visible pain, dental issues, lethargy, food left uneaten, etc.
- Ensure your pet gets plenty of exercise and has two sources of fresh water

Top 5 Reasons to Offer a Variety of Hays

1. HELPS PREVENT PICKY EATING

Access to a variety of tastes and textures can expand your pet's palate and help him manage the natural variability that can occur between bags of hay.

2. SUPPORTS KEY NUTRITIONAL NEEDS

Fiber is key to small herbivore health. Having access to hay varieties encourages consumption throughout the day, making sure your pet consumes enough fiber to stay healthy.

3. KEEPS MEALTIME FUN & ENRICHING

Eating the same meal day after day gets boring! Offering variety keeps pets active, mentally stimulated, and enriched.

4. STRENGTHENS THE HUMAN/ANIMAL BOND

Offering your pet a variety of tastes and textures is fun for pet and pet parent alike. Experiment with flavor combinations to discover your pet's favorites.

5. ENCOURAGES NATURAL FORAGING BEHAVIOR

In the wild, your pet would spend much of his day foraging for a variety of plant material. Offer multiple varieties of hay to encourage these healthy, natural behaviors.



Hay's Not Just for Herbivores! While it's critical for herbivore wellbeing, other animals can benefit from hay. This forage is a great source of enrichment for birds such as finches and chickens, as well as mammals like hamsters, gerbils, and rats. Enrichment opportunities can include burrowing, nesting, and playing. Mammals may especially enjoy oat hay for its tasty, immature seed heads.

DIY *Mental Enrichment*

To make mealtime more enriching for your pet, stuff hay into hideouts or other "safe to chew" containers, such as paper towel rolls or toilet paper rolls. You can also bury a couple of your pet's favorite treats in hay and watch them hunt for tasty snacks.



WHAT ARE *"Open-Rooted" Teeth?*

Rabbits, guinea pigs, chinchillas, and other small animals have "open-rooted" teeth. These teeth grow continuously throughout the animal's life. Without proper dental wear, serious issues can arise, including malocclusion (improper alignment of top and bottom teeth), tooth elongation, and dental disease. Eating hay daily provides your pet the necessary wear to help ensure that teeth do not become overgrown.